UFL NEWS

A Newsletter of the University Federation of Librarians, Berkeley Campus, AFT Local 1795
Representing librarians at the University of California, Berkeley

October 1989 | Editor: Lillian Castillo-Speed | Volume 3 No. 2

THE BIG QUAKE

Campus Insensitivity and the Library Leadership Vacuum

Berkeley Chancellor Ira Michael Heyman acted unreasonably and irresponsibly when he decided to keep open the Berkeley campus on October 18, 1989, the day after the 7.0 earthquake. In so doing he endangered the lives of Berkeley faculty, students, staff and others who entered uninspected campus buildings, and he hampered area-wide recovery efforts.

To cope with the widespread devastation and disruption, and the probability of strong aftershocks, the mayors of San Francisco and Oakland, CALTRANS, and emergency service agencies urged employers to close non-essential operations on the day following the quake, and asked employees and others to not go to work and to avoid using the area's severely crippled transportation system. Chancellor Heyman chose to ignore these pleas and decided that the campus would be open on the 18th.

The Chancellor is quoted by the *Daily Californian* as saying, "It doesn't look like the campus was hit very hard." Fortunately his assessment appears to be correct, but it expressed an amazingly callous disregard not only for the University community, but also for the larger public good. With an arrogance all too typical of top University of California administrators, Heyman seemed concerned only with his buildings, not their human contents. He apparently gave no thought to the fact that employees were told to go to work in buildings or parts of buildings which had not in fact been inspected for structural damage or safety hazards. He was unconcerned about the impact of 30,000 students and many thousands of faculty and staff -- UC Berkeley is one of the Bay area's largest employers -- traveling to campus as usual.

Heyman chose to ignore the personal difficulties of those students, faculty, and staff who live in San Francisco and other areas which were suddenly very difficult to reach. He was unimpressed with the fact that many living in San Francisco could not get to their dwellings at all on the evening of the 17th. He failed to take into account the fact that many school systems in the area were closed, creating instant child care problems for students and employees alike. Perhaps most important, he completely disregarded the fact that an unknown number of students and employees lost not only their places of residence, but perhaps even family members and friends.

Chancellor Heyman should not have thumbed his nose at the campus community and at those public officials who requested his cooperation in a severe emergency. At the very least, the Chancel-

lor should have cancelled all classes and eliminated all non-essential campus services on the day following the quake. This is the action taken by many public and private employers throughout the area. Cancelling classes would have had the added benefit of freeing some UC employees, including experts in engineering, transportation, and public health, to aid recovery efforts.

One can only hope that our next Chancellor feels a responsibility to the campus community and the citizens of the Bay area.

Leaderless Library Flounders

If Chancellor Heyman acted irresponsibly, at least he did act. In contrast, Berkeley's Library leaders let the night and much of the morning slip by without making any decisions. Unbelievable as it may seem, 8:00 a.m. the next morning came and went with no clearly identifiable person who was in charge of the Library -- University Librarian Rosenthal was out of town, and by week's end had not returned. The Library had no discernable action plan for the Main Library complex. Employees, and even Library department heads, received no word on what actions they and those they supervised should take. They were told -- depending upon when and to whom they spoke -- to go home, to stay or come to work, to come back at noon, to work in the Library Annex, or not to work there. Yellow police ribbons blocked off most outside doors of the Main Library complex until well after 8 am; neither persons nor signs had been consistently posted at these doors to inform arriving employees what to do until later in the day: presumably some employees saw doors blockaded and left. Once inside the building, individual department heads whose units were in the

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Library Annex were initially given little or no guidance on whether to open their units to the public; some consulted with each other in an attempt to find out what was going on and what was expected of them. One department head asked a non-supervisory librarian what to do. Another department head phoned the Librarian's Office and was told that all campus libraries had been closed.

Although Library employees had been assured that their libraries were safe and structurally sound, in fact many areas had not been examined at all. When dangerous conditions were discovered on the first floor of Doe (two days after the quake), employees were astounded when told that inspectors of course did not have time to look at every room within the building. At week's end, most employees had not been informed by anyone in the Library administration that some areas remained uninspected. To their credit, however, when damage was discovered and reported by employees, Library administrators quickly came to inspect them. Not so lucky were some Affiliated Libraries, whose damage reports or concerns went unanswered for the entire week.

In the wake of a near collapse of responsible leadership in the Library, it is clear that urgent remedial action is needed. We call upon University Librarian Rosenthal to take the following steps:

1. Develop clear and prudent policies and procedures for handling emergency situations -- such as the one we are still stumbling through.

2. An emergency leadership chain of command must be identified and made known to a wide group of Library employees, especially to department heads.

3. It would be prudent to psychologically screen the persons who might be put in charge of the Library to determine their suitability for effective leadership during crises.

4. Give emergency leadership skills training to library leaders and department heads.

5. The plan and training must insure that emergency action plans and instructions will be developed in a timely manner and effectively communicated. Brainstorming and even some floundering are fine for committee meetings, but have no place during a crisis.

6. A telephone tree or other means of emergency communication (such as radio announcements) must be part of the plan. Such communications must go out from the head of the library down through the Associate University Librarians, to the department and unit heads, and ultimately down to every employee. Efforts should have been made to inform all Library employees about expectations for the "day after" prior to the time they arrived on the job Wednesday morning.

7. The Library administration must learn to treat employees like adults. It must tell employees the truth and be willing to ask them for help if it is needed. Failing to do a complete inspection of Library units and then misleading employees about the safety of their workplaces is inexcusable. If help is needed to do inspections (or for other

emergency duty), large numbers of intelligent and observant employees are available and willing; they need only be asked by someone in charge.

8. Work with campus officials, the AFT, and other organizations to seek funding and to otherwise get a higher priority placed on making campus buildings housing libraries seismically sound.

YOUR INPUT IS REQUIRED

The UFL is asking all Librarians to share their experiences during the earthquake aftermath. Please contact any member of the Executive Board to report any problems, concerns or questions you may have about the safety of your work site. Was your building inspected? According to a letter sent to the UFL by the Office of Labor Relations on October 19, there was an inspection of all buildings on October 17 and a second inspection on October 18. Did you see any inspectors?

DOING WHAT WE CAN TO HELP

The UFL Executive Board is at the moment planning to make a monetary contribution for earthquake relief to an appropriate agency.

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TO: B. Roberts